



Hon Stephen Robertson MP
Member for Stretton



Queensland
Government

Minister for Natural Resources,
Mines and Energy and
Minister for Trade

Ref CTS 13729/10

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

LAID UPON THE TABLE OF THE HOUSE	
No.:	5310T 2911
- 3 SEP 2010	
MP:	Hon S. Robertson MP
Clerk's Signature:	

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your letter of 4 August 2010 enclosing a copy of Petition No's. 1456-10 and 1497-10, lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

The Petitions draw to the attention of the House that the Cairns Regional Council intends to draw 15,000 megalitres of water per year from the Mulgrave Aquifer for urban water supply. The petitioners believe that investigations into the impact of lowered water tables on the environments of the Mulgrave Valley are inadequate. The petitioners request an independent review of the Cairns Regional Council's intention to take water from the Mulgrave River aquifer.

The Cairns Regional Council has a water entitlement for taking 15,000 megalitres per annum from the Mulgrave River aquifer, which was granted under the *Water Resources Act 1989* in August 2001.

The Department of Environment and Resource Management is preparing a draft water resource plan for the Wet Tropics basins. This will involve rigorous environmental and hydrological assessments, as well as social and economic studies for each catchment, including the Mulgrave River aquifer.

As part of this process, ecological and environmental management outcomes will be identified, which will ensure sustainable management of the water resources in the Mulgrave River catchment. For instance, where these assessments identify connections between surface and groundwater resources, the plan can identify strategies to ensure equitable sharing of the single connected system.

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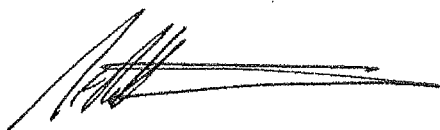
The water resource planning process will offer a number of opportunities for the community to have input through formal submissions, as well as informal community engagement throughout the development of the draft water resource plan. Stakeholder meetings are scheduled for the Mulgrave catchment in late 2010.

The Cairns Regional Council's Public Environment Report is in response to the Commonwealth, which has indicated that the proposed extraction of water from the aquifer has the potential to impact on matters of national environmental significance. In line with the Commonwealth's advice, the Cairns Regional Council has undertaken further investigation and developed the Public Environment Report. This document is currently available from the Cairns Regional Council's website at www.cairns.qld.gov.au, but is not associated with any legislative decision process in Queensland.

At this stage I believe it is appropriate to ask the Commonwealth for any assessment of the Public Environment Report that it has undertaken. I will write to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment requesting any assessment so that it can be considered as part of the water resource planning process.

Should you have any further enquiries please do not hesitate to contact Mr Patrick Huber, Principal Project Officer, DERM on telephone (07) 4048 4811.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Robertson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP